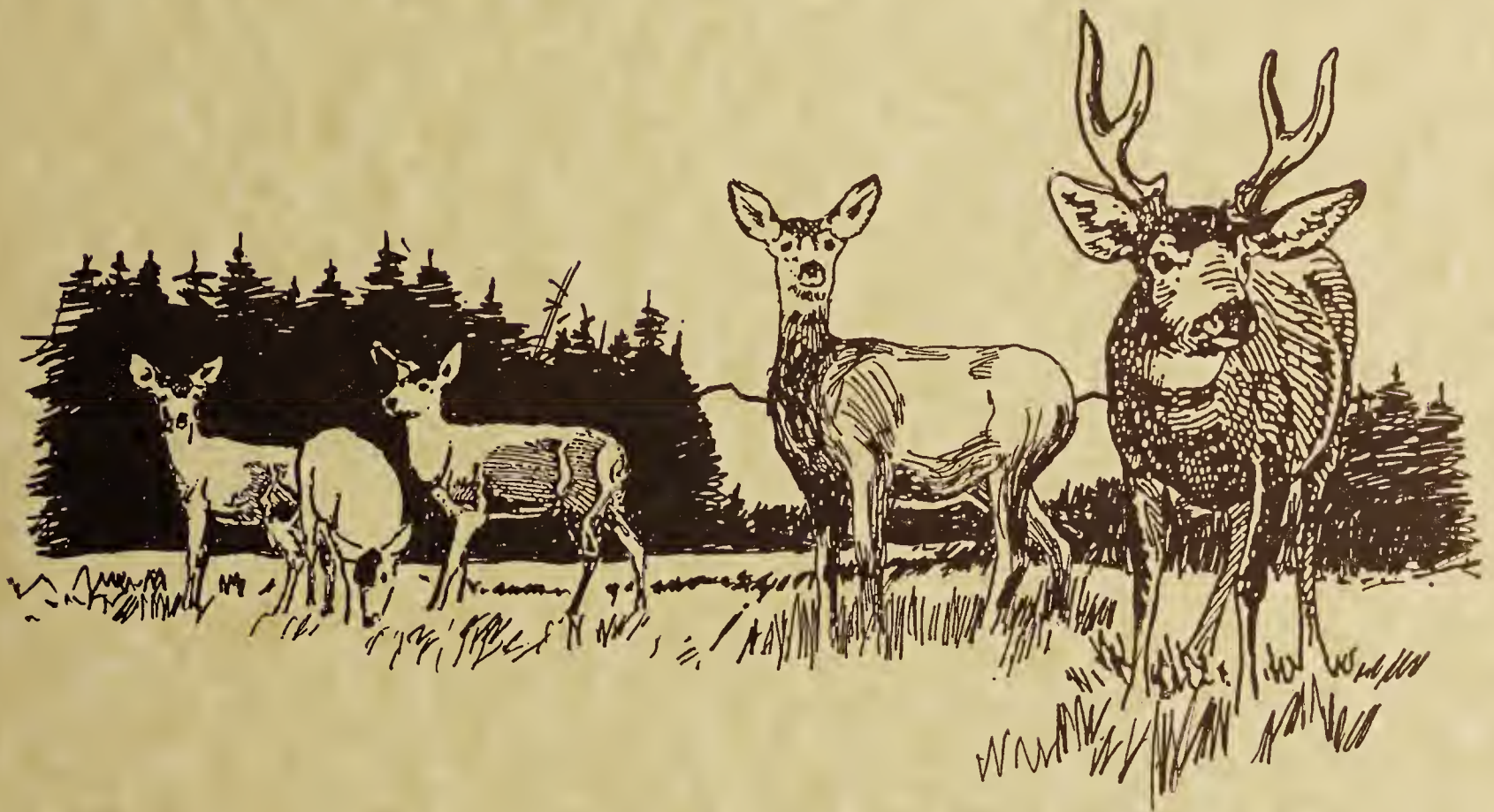


Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

# **HUNTER BEHAVIOR ADVISORY COUNCIL**

**Final  
Recommendations**

**December 1998**



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# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In January 1998, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Director Patrick J. Graham selected 16 Montanans to serve on the state's Hunter Behavior Advisory Council. This citizens' council led a statewide effort that involved local residents and groups in identifying, defining and recommending solutions to hunting behavior problems in Montana.

The council members were chosen to represent a geographic cross-section of Montana. The council is made up of 12 men and four women. Council members range in age from 21 to over 60 years old. Five are landowners. Fifteen are hunters. Four are hunter education or bowhunter education instructors. Three are full-time cattle ranchers. Two are full-time college students. One is a newspaper editor. One is a financial planner. One is a judge. One is a county commissioner. One is a state employee. One is a taxidermist. One is an outfitter. One is a retired policeman. One is a retired high school principal. One is a retired FWP biologist who is now the executive director of a national hunter ethics organization.

## **The Council's Charge**

FWP Director Graham asked the council to:

- Identify specific unethical behaviors that are most troublesome in Montana.
- Determine how hunter behavior affects private- and public-land access.
- Provide the hunting community—by December 1998 and through FWP—with recommendations for teaching and advocating ethical hunting in Montana to enable hunters to maintain public support for hunting by practicing and publicly advocating responsible hunting activities and behaviors.
- Recommend ways to improve identified hunter behavior problems in the least regulatory way possible.

By February 1998 the council began its deliberations. Full council meetings were held in Helena, Missoula, Lewistown and Bozeman. In addition to scheduling various community discussions over the spring, summer and fall, the council also sponsored open houses in Missoula, Lewistown, Billings and Havre.

## **Grass Roots to Experts: Defining the Problem**

Over the course of the council's meetings, members received training and accepted testimony from experts in the field of hunting ethics, history, and education, including reports from Stephen Bissel, PhD., Senior Associate for Qualitative Research for Responsive Management of Harrisonburg, Virginia; Joshua Winchell, Outdoor Ethics Program Director for the Izaak Walton League of America; Mik Mikitik, director of Washington State's hunter education programs; and James E. Knight, Extension Wildlife Specialist, Montana State University. The council also received correspondences from more than 400 Montanans who communicated with the council via its mail-in response form.

The question of hunter behavior has become increasingly associated with maintaining established opportunities in the face of many pressures that appear to challenge some hunting customs, methods and practices. The establishment of the council was in response to these issues and recent recommendations made by the original Private Land/Public Wildlife Advisory Council, and requests by hunters, landowners, the FWP Commission and FWP wardens and biologists that FWP examine today's hunting environment from the standpoints of sportsmanship, land access and wildlife management.

Nationally, Montana is second in the number of people, per capita, who hunt. To continue this honorable outdoor tradition, FWP's Hunter Behavior Advisory Council believes that today's hunters must not only examine what they expect from themselves, but also must explore the manner in which they and fellow hunters will pursue wildlife in the future.

## **In Response to Public Comment**

The Hunter Behavior Advisory Council's "Draft Recommendations for Public Comment" was published in October 1998. More than 1,350 copies of the draft recommendations were distributed, with 600 copies sent directly to individuals, conservation organizations, rod and gun clubs, agricultural organizations, U.S. Forest Service regional supervisors, Montana and national journalists, and others.

The draft comment period closed December 1. By the deadline, the council received about 60 correspondences via mail, E-mail, telephone, and through the Hunter Behavior Advisory Council's Internet site. Those respondents touched on about 120 issues that were considered by the council at its final meeting in Helena on December 1-2. In all, about 50 respondents expressed general support for the council's efforts and recommendations; about 35 of their comments pointed to additional issues--particularly the use of All-Terrain and Off-Road vehicles--that warranted discussion; about 25 comments expressed concern about issues like the cost of hunting and various aspects of public hunting access; and six comments expressed displeasure with specific draft recommendations.

In response to public comment, the council revised portions of Problem Statements 2 and 4 and their corresponding recommendations. The revisions reflect public comments that: (1) sought to streamline or otherwise revise the council's adult hunter education recommendations; and (2) urged the council to address "fair chase" issues as they relate to the growing use of All-Terrain and Off-Road vehicles during the hunting season.

In addition, the council defined the "hunting community" in its Guiding Principles; stressed the need for regular communication among members of the hunting community; suggested that FWP create a 1-800 hunting-season information hotline to answer questions during the hunting season; further suggested that FWP simplify Montana's hunting regulations and strive to create less competitive hunting circumstances; and sought to offer Montana judges some discretion in sentencing and fining individuals who commit "blatant and repeat" wildlife-law violations.

While many of the Council's recommendations can be implemented by FWP, many need to

be addressed on the local level by individual members of the hunting community, in both the public and private sectors. Some recommendations, like those associated with expanding Montana's hunter education program to include adult programs and offerings, will need legislative attention.

These recommendations are respectfully submitted to FWP as a guideline to follow to build better relationships among all members of the hunting community. The Hunter Behavior Advisory Council will convene again in December 1999 to assess the progress made toward establishing these recommendations, improvements, and programs within Montana's hunting community.

## **Core Recommendations: Continuing Education and Awareness**

The recommendations from the Hunter Behavior Advisory Council have strong educational components designed to reach four specific goals to:

1. Reinforce the significance of our hunting heritage, the diverse values associated with it and the general hunting experience.
2. Build on Montana's existing hunter education program, and develop and implement continuing education programs for adult hunters, guides and outfitters, and for resource managers and landowners associated with the hunting environment.
3. Increase the level of respect, appreciation and communication among the hunting community for private and public landowners who provide habitat for wildlife and access for hunters.
4. Create a hunting environment in which hunters are willing to accept their legal obligation to know, understand and observe regulations, and, while participating in hunting activities, behave in a socially responsible manner that honors hunting.

To reach these goals, the council has offered a series of specific recommendations that, when taken as a whole, express an education and community theme by suggesting a need for "a high-quality Montana Hunter's Handbook," "user friendly regulations," "respect and appreciation among hunters and landowners," "instilling realistic expectations in hunters" and creating a "continuum of educational opportunities available for all hunters."

The council's core recommendation seeks to build on Montana's existing hunter education program, and to develop additional education programs and offerings that would appeal to adult members of the hunting community. The council further recommends a mandatory hunter education course for convicted wildlife-law violators.

The council also addressed the need to increase and be consistent with the level of fines for wildlife-law violations and recommends that specific sentencing guidelines be developed for judges to apply against blatant and repeat wildlife-law violators.



## **Personal Responsibility**

The Hunter Behavior Advisory Council has concluded that problem hunter behavior actually undermines important relationships and reduces private-land access and hunting opportunity.

It is the council's belief that landowners and managers continue to contribute to Montana's wildlife restoration and conservation success story, but trespass, ethical lapses and repeated acts of disrespect by some individuals can lead to increased tension within the hunting community.

The hunting community itself, however, can help to alleviate some of these problems by developing local sportsmen and landowner cooperative efforts that could foster better community-based relationships and a new era of mutual respect and understanding.

The recommendations that follow are offered in that spirit of mutual respect that can be created among responsible hunters, landowners, guides and outfitters, land managers and the men and women who are entrusted with managing Montana's wildlife.



# THE HUNTER BEHAVIOR ADVISORY COUNCIL

**ELAINE ALLESTAD**—Big Timber—Rancher; Sweet Grass County Commissioner; former FWP Commissioner.

**JOHN BERGER**—Bozeman—Hunter; owner and operator of Berger Taxidermy.

**DON BOTHWELL**—Kalispell—Hunter; Hunter Education Instructor; participant in Germany's *Jaegermeister* program.

**DONALD DVOROZNAK**—Thompson Falls—Hunter; member Montana Bowhunters Association.

**CHAD HUDDLESTON**—(Ex-officio member) Missoula—University of Montana graduate student in Anthropology studying the behaviors of hunters in North America and the cultural rules guiding that behavior.

**CONNIE LORD**—Philipsburg—Rancher; Block Management cooperator; member of Montana Stockgrowers Association.

**JUDGE GREG MOHR**—Sidney—Hunter; Justice of the Peace; Chief Bowhunter Education Instructor for Richland County.

**DAN PETERS**—Butte—Hunter; retired Principal of Butte High School; member of Skyline Sportsmen's Association.

**JIM POSEWITZ**—Helena—Executive director of Orion: The Hunter's Institute; president of Prickly Pear Sportsmen's Association; member of Montana Wildlife Federation.

**ROBERT REUKAUF**—Terry—Rancher; Block Management cooperator.

**MARY ELLEN SCHNUR**—Deep Creek—Outfitter and rancher; member of Montana Outfitters and Guides Association.

**DAVID SMITH**—Miles City—Rancher; Hunter Education Instructor; and Block Management cooperator.

**MICHAEL SPRAGUE**—Great Falls—Sportsman.

**STEVE WOODRUFF**—Missoula—Editor for the *Missoulian*; hunter; member of Big Sky Upland Bird Association.

**LARRY WHITMYER, JR.**—Billings—Student Montana State University-Billings; hunter; member of Montana Wildlife Federation; Billings Rod & Gun Club, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Rimrock 4x4 Club.

**JANICE L. YOUNGBAUER**—Lewistown—Hunter; secretary of Lewistown Bowhunters Association.

## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

### **The Hunter Behavior Advisory Council believes:**

1. The hunting community includes: resident and nonresident hunters, wildlife managers, guides, outfitters, land managers, and private landowners.
2. High ethical standards and values are best promoted through education and life-long learning.
3. Education is a shared responsibility among FWP, hunting and conservation groups, other community institutions, and the family and peers of the hunter. A better understanding of hunter-behavior issues and solutions can be achieved by expanding Montana's education program to reach a broad cross section of our communities.
4. Hunters earn the privilege to hunt on private and public land.
5. There is a positive correlation between ethical hunting and the future prosperity of wildlife and their habitats.
6. Block Management and its principles provide examples of strategies that are enhancing sportsmen and landowner relationships.
7. The hunting community must acknowledge ethical standards and take pride in following those standards.
8. Ethical hunters can act as mentors for the less experienced, and be effective ambassadors-at-large for many conservation issues.
9. Hunting offers individual experiences and that all members of the hunting community are responsible for their own behaviors.
10. Hunters who view ethical pursuit as an important part of hunting success will obtain greater enjoyment and satisfaction from their hunting experiences.
11. Most ethics violations are opportunistic rather than premeditated.
12. Land- and wildlife-management agencies have a responsibility to provide hunting environments that encourage ethical behavior.
13. The definition of hunting success must encompass all aspects of the hunt, not just the taking of an animal.

# PROBLEM STATEMENTS, GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## Problem Statement No. I

*Unrealistic expectations compromise hunter behavior and hunting opportunities.*

A focus on the harvest of vast numbers of game and exceptionally large animals—as opposed to the hunting experience itself—influences hunters to compromise ethics. In turn, unethical behavior diminishes the essence of the hunt and the public image of hunting. Consequently, hunting opportunities decrease.

**GOAL:** Reinforce the significance of our hunting heritage, the diverse values associated with it and the general hunting experience.

## Recommendations

1. Within the hunting community, create a continuum of educational opportunities available for all hunters to increase understanding about the values associated with our hunting heritage.
  - a. Promote and communicate the benefits of hunting.
  - b. Sponsor workshops that develop an array of hunting-related topics, including: the history of hunting and conservation; wildlife natural history; and various other “how-to” aspects of the hunt.
  - c. Continue to implement recommendations that emerge from the Governor’s Symposia on North America’s Hunting Heritage.
  - d. Encourage the public use of hunting journals and logs and develop a delivery system to game managers. Find outdoor writers who might be willing to pursue a story or series related to a hunting journal.
2. Recruit hunting and conservation organizations to articulate realistic hunting expectations in less competitive circumstances.
3. Work with the media to articulate realistic hunting experiences and the benefits of hunting.
  - a. Develop working relationships with editors of major magazines and newspapers, outdoor writers and electronic and broadcast media.
  - b. Identify hunting-gear advertisers who are willing to create a “realistic hunting experience and hunting heritage” ad campaign.
  - c. Conduct a FWP media campaign designed to encourage realistic hunting expectations and an appreciation of hunting as a whole experience.



## ► Problem Statement No. 2

*Montana does not have a continuing hunter education program for adults seeking information, training and instruction, nor does it provide adult orientation opportunities for hunters new to Montana.*

Knowledge is essential to each hunter's enjoyment and success. By developing an innovative continuing hunter education program, Montana can help the hunting community acquire greater appreciation from their outdoor experiences and hunting traditions, and strengthen the public's understanding and support of hunting as an important recreational and cultural activity. While Montana has an extensive and effective entry-level hunter education program, few opportunities exist for intermediate and advanced-level hunter education.

Montana also could benefit from the development of a remedial hunter education program for game-law violators.

Improving hunter behavior will require additional educational opportunities, hunting environments conducive to ethical choices, and motivational incentives for the hunting community to participate.

The Hunter Behavior Advisory Council also recognizes a need to create and provide continuing educational opportunities for wildlife and public-land managers.

**GOAL: Building on Montana's existing hunter education program, develop and implement continuing educational programs for adult hunters and for resource managers and landowners associated with the hunting environment.**

## Recommendations

1. Establish a multi-tier Hunter Education Program to include:
  - a. Basic Youth Hunter Education
    - (i) Mandatory, ages 12 through 17; no fee.
    - (ii) Continue current FWP program.
  - b. Basic Adult Hunter Education
    - (i) Hunters in Montana ages 18 and older.
    - (ii) Voluntary; adult-focused and user pay.
    - (iii) Mandatory for first-time Montana resident license purchaser.
  - c. Enhanced Adult Hunter Education
    - (i) For members of the hunting community seeking more involved training and instruction.

- d. Remedial Hunter Education for Game law violations
  - (i) Mandatory; adult-focused; based on FWP curriculum; violator pay.
- 3. Provide discussion forums and training opportunities for FWP employees and other natural resource managers who plan and design hunting environments and hunting circumstances.
- 4. Develop a program to recruit and retain hunter education instructors.

### ► Problem Statement No. 3

*Problem behavior undermines important relationships and reduces private-land access and hunting opportunity.*

In addition to providing hunting opportunities and offering advice and consideration to hunters, landowners and land managers continue to contribute to Montana's wildlife restoration and conservation success story. These Montanans are worthy of the respect and appreciation of the hunting community. Landowners and hunters have many common interests and are natural partners, but trespass, ethical lapses and repeated acts of disrespect by some individuals can lead to increased tensions within the hunting community.

**GOAL:** Increase the level of respect, appreciation and communication among the hunting community for private and public landowners who provide habitat for wildlife and access for hunters.

### Recommendations

1. Continue the consensus-building efforts of the Private Land/Public Wildlife Advisory Council by:
  - a. Expanding the Block Management Program and exploring new strategies and incentives to continue its success.
  - b. Publicizing and enhancing FWP's "Ask First" promotions and its TIP-MONT program.
  - c. Establishing meaningful incentives and awards programs to recognize landowner contributions to wildlife conservation and hunter access.
2. Evaluate and communicate impacts of hunting seasons and regulations on the region, community, landowners and sportsmen through:
  - a. Establishing a criteria check list to be utilized by FWP and the FWP Commission in considering season and regulation changes.
  - b. Informing landowners and cooperators of season dates and regulations annually.

3. Encourage and develop sportsmen and landowner cooperative efforts through:
  - a. Sportsmen's watch groups.
  - b. Landowner assistance from sportsmen's groups.
  - c. Landowner appreciation awards from sportsmen's groups.
4. Establish education/development programs to further landowner respect and appreciation utilizing:
  - a. Resource Conservation Districts, Extension Service, FWP Divisions.
  - b. Various conservation, community and civic groups.

## ► Problem Statement No. 4

*Some hunting areas and regulations can create excessively competitive hunting situations, which can contribute to poor hunter behavior.*


To strengthen the hunting community's image, and instill a better understanding of our hunting heritage, it is important to create a hunting environment in which: the animal is valued; the land is respected; the landowner is appreciated; and where ethical decisions and behaviors become a natural choice.

**GOAL:** Create a hunting environment in which hunters are willing to accept their legal obligation to know, understand and observe regulations, and, while participating in hunting activities, behave in a socially responsible manner that honors hunting.

## Recommendations

1. Montana's hunting regulations should strive for consistency to decrease, and perhaps eliminate, unintentional violations. Review and revise hunting regulations to make them easy to use and understand to encourage ethical decisions and behaviors as natural choices.
  - a. Simplify hunting district boundaries and explore opportunities where major natural or man-made terrain features could serve as hunting-district boundaries.
  - b. Designate "walk-in," motor vehicle and pack-in areas on hunting district maps with symbols; provide a legend.
  - c. Include information on hunting ethics and heritage in the hunting regulations.
  - d. Promote noncompetitive hunting circumstances.
2. Create a "Montana Hunters' Handbook" that depicts Montana's game species, regional hunting opportunities and individual responsibilities.



3. Create a licensing-procedure checklist or manual for license agents.
    - a. Tab/index the manual to facilitate proper identification and completion of license forms in all formats (handwritten or computerized).
    - b. Provide all license agents with a "master copy" of hunting regulations, perhaps in a three-ring binder format, to help license agents provide answers to commonly asked questions. Any format should allow for the insertion of regular updates.
  4. Establish mandatory sentencing guidelines for game law violations. Increase and be consistent with the level of fines for blatant and repeat offenders.
  5. Work with the Montana Outfitters and Guides Association to ensure hunter education competence in outfitters, guides and their employees who work with the hunting public.
  6. Emphasize public relations and communication skills for all FWP personnel in dealing with the landowner, the hunter and the recreational land user.
  7. Integrate hunter behavior and fair chase considerations into FWP motorized recreation programs. Create an ATV citizens' advisory group to explore and address problem behaviors.
  8. Encourage federal land managers to address hunter behavior and fair chase considerations in travel management programs.
  9. Explore the creation of a 1-800-telephone hotline for readily accessible information on hunting regulations during the hunting season.
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## Appendix





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# **Hunter Behavior Advisory Council**

## **Tabulations of Hunter Behavior Advisory Council Response-Form Correspondence**

**Compiled by Rick A. Fink and Tom Palmer**

**October 15, 1998**

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## Highlights

- \* A total of 413 response forms were completed and returned to FWP by August 20, 1998. Of these returned response forms, all were complete and usable.
- \* Response forms were returned from every FWP region.
- \* Of the 413 respondents, 93 percent purchased a Montana hunting license in the past five years.
- \* Eighty-six percent of the respondents stated that they had hunted in Montana this past season.
- \* Fifty-two percent of the respondents stated they were affiliated with either sport hunting or conservation groups.
- \* The quest for big game was the respondents' predominant hunting goal, followed by upland gamebirds.
- \* The top five behavior problems witnessed by respondents last season were:
  - 1. Trespassing
  - 2. Lack of respect for landowner (tie)
  - 2. Improper vehicle use/road hunting (tie)
  - 4. Lack of respect for game and/or resources
  - 5. Damaging and littering others' property
- \* "Trespassing" and "Lack of respect for landowner" were identified as the two most pressing behavior problems that need to be addressed and improved, followed closely by "Improper vehicle use/road hunting" and "Lack of respect for game and/or resources."
- \* Respondents' comments indicate:
  - 1. concern about access and guides/outfitters buying "hunting rights"
  - 2. concern about a few bad hunters making all hunters look unethical
  - 3. a need for stricter penalties for littering, trespassing, poaching, and defacing property
  - 4. general support for the HBAC effort
  - 5. concern about widespread use of ATVs and their negative impact on the sport of hunting
- \* An overwhelming majority, 91 percent, would support an organized effort to improve hunter behavior in Montana.

## **Introduction**

The Hunter Behavior Advisory Council (HBAC) response form was designed and distributed to help identify hunting-related behaviors that are most troublesome in Montana and to offer anyone interested in these issues an easy way to gain access to the council and its decision-making process.

In January 1998, FWP Director Patrick J. Graham established the 16-member HBAC citizen council. The council represents a geographic cross section of Montanans, made up of twelve men and four women who range in age from 20 to 60, and have occupations ranging from college student to executive director of a national hunter-ethics organization. In February, the council began a statewide effort to involve local residents and groups in identifying, defining, and recommending solutions to hunter behavior problems in Montana.

The goals of HBAC are to:

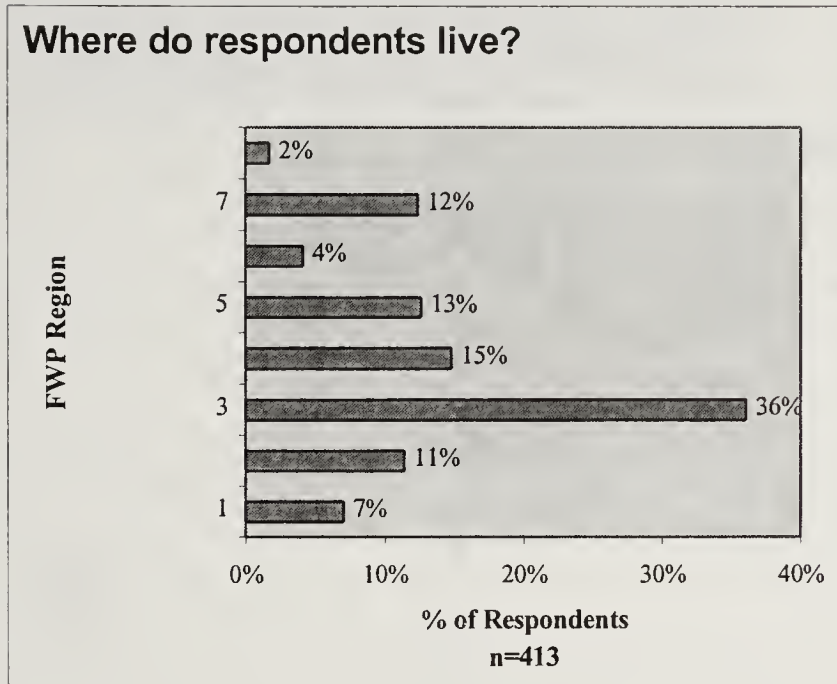
- \* Identify specific unethical behaviors that are most troublesome in Montana.
- \* Determine how hunter behavior affects both private and public land access.
- \* Provide the hunting community--by December 1998--with recommendations for teaching and advocating ethical hunting in Montana to enable hunters to maintain public support for hunting by practicing and publicly advocating responsible hunting activities and behaviors.
- \* Recommend ways to improve identified hunter behavior problems in the least regulatory way possible.

Response-form communications have provided HBAC with valuable feedback that has helped the council better understand the hunter behavior issue and to frame its recommendations. It is important to note that the tabulation of 413 returned response forms is not to be construed as scientific data, but merely a summary of communication between individuals and the council.



## RESULTS

*The original question found on response form simply asked for the respondents' name and mailing address. This information was then converted into FWP Regions for ease of data input into the CATI program.*



Respondents reside in every FWP region. The majority (36%) of the respondents reside in Region 3. The next highest represented Region was Region 4 at 15%, followed closely by Region 5 at 13%, and Region 7 at 12%. FWP Region 1 came in next at 7% of all respondents, followed by Region 6. Only 2% of the respondents gave "No Response" for this question.

The actual number of respondents per FWP Region breaks down as follows:

FWP Region	Actual Number of Responses
1	29
2	47
3	149
4	61
5	52
6	17
7	51
No Response	7

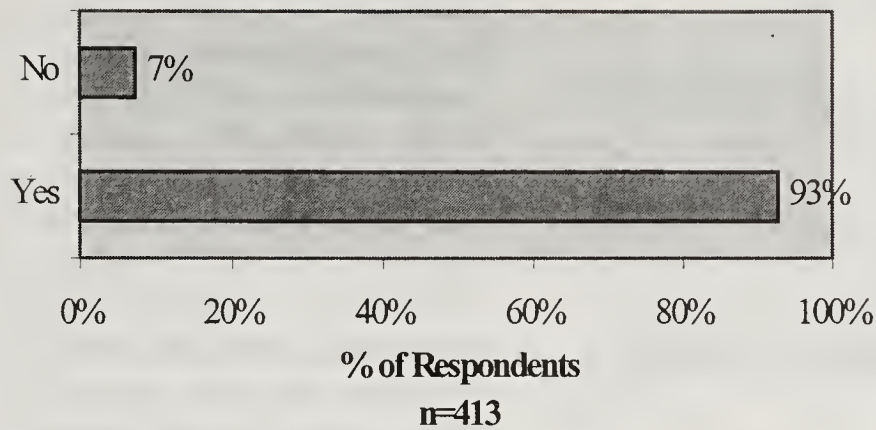
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**Question 1: What group would you say you are most closely affiliated with?**

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Sportsman (general category)	49
Montana Bowhunters Association	24
Landowner/Rancher	19
Hunter Education	18
National Rifle Association	12
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation	12
Beaverhead Outdoors Association	10
Missouri Headwaters Gundog Club	9
Bullhook Bottoms Black Powder Club	7
Law Enforcement	7
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks	6
Lewistown Bowhunters Association	6
Montana Wildlife Federation	6
Skyline Sportsmen's Association	4
Billings Rod & Gun Club	3
Ducks Unlimited	3
Noxious Weed Control	3
Bitterroot Sporting Clays	2
Orion--The Hunters Institute	2
Audubon Society	1
Big Sky Upland Bird Association	1
Central Montana Handgunners Club	1
Competitive Shooting Groups	1
Game Warden Association	1
Outfitter	1
Montana 4 x 4 Association	1
Prickley Pear Sportsmen's Association	1
Public Lands Access Association, Inc.	1
Roundup Sportsmen's Association	1
Trout Unlimited	1
<b>Total Number Declaring An Affiliation</b>	<b>214</b>
<b>Percent Of Respondents Declaring An Affiliation</b>	<b>52%</b>

**Question 2: Have you purchased a Montana hunting license in the past 5 years?**

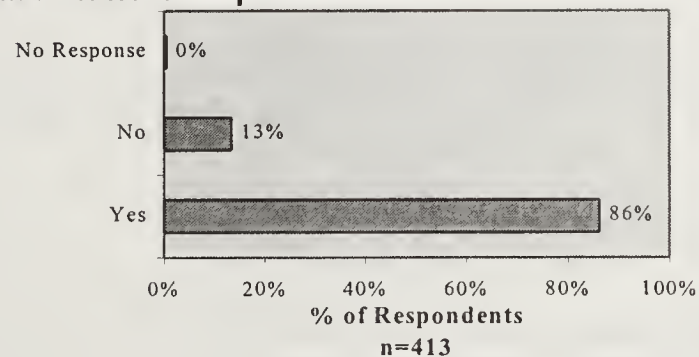


When asked if they had bought a Montana hunting license in the past five years, 93% of the respondents stated that they had purchased one. Only 7% of the respondents stated that they had not bought a license in the past five years. These results indicate a high level of hunting activity within the group of respondents.

*Percentages have been rounded resulting in a total under 100%*

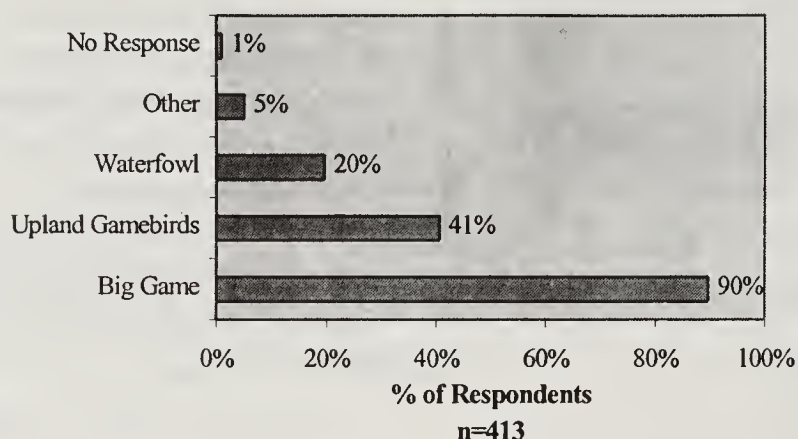
Over eight in 10 respondents (86%) declared that they did hunt in Montana within the past season. Only 13% said that they did not hunt the past season, and less than 1% had no response to this question.

**Question 3: Did you hunt in Montana this past season?**



Because this question allowed for more than one response, percentages will not total 100%. Quite often, more than one type of game animal was checked.

**Question 4: When I hunt, I prefer to hunt...**



Question 4 shows the hunting preference(s) of the respondents. By far, the most sought after hunting experience was big game with it being checked by 90 percent of the survey respondents. Next was upland gamebirds with 41%. Waterfowl was selected by 20%, and "Other" was marked by 5% of the respondents.

Any "Other" response was then asked for some clarification as to what the respondent hunted. This category was limited to Varmints/Small game (gopher, squirrels, etc.), Predators/Coyotes, and Mountain lions.

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**Question 4 "Other" Comments**

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Varmints/small game [gophers, rabbits, etc.] (17)  
Predators/Coyotes (5)  
Mountain lions



---

**Question 5: Please check any of the hunter behavior problems listed below that you have personally witnessed this past season.**

---

<b>Behavior</b>	<b># of Resp.</b>	<b>% of 413</b>
Trespassing	204	49%
Lack of respect for landowner	196	47%
Improper vehicle use/road hunting	195	47%
Lack of respect for game and/or resources	187	45%
Damaging and littering others' property	155	38%
Drinking alcohol and hunting	137	33%
Conflict between hunters competing for game/hunting areas	100	24%
Not recovering a wounded animal	88	21%
Game law violations/illegal hunting	82	20%
Killing a game animal that would not be eaten	74	18%
Taking or attempting to take game before or after legal shooting hours	65	16%
Shooting in unsafe locations; close to buildings	60	15%
Illegal tag use/party hunting	53	13%
Other	46	11%
Taking or attempting to take game out of season	42	10%
Exceeding bag limits	35	8%
Spotlighting	31	8%
Use of improper or illegal equipment	25	6%
Improper or illegal use of electronic equipment	20	5%
No response	16	4%

[Note: Three of the top five hunter behavior problems are hunter/landowner relations problems. Trespass ranks second among the most common violations for which FWP issues citations.]

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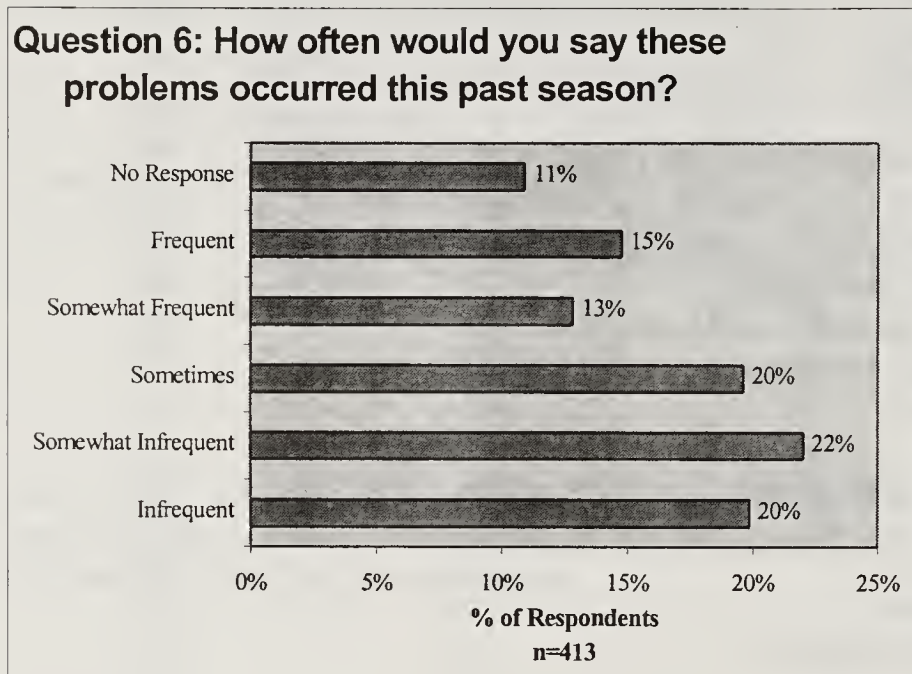
**Question 5 "Other" Comments**

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The top two most commonly mentioned hunter behavior problems cited under the "Other" category were: (1) Use of ATVs; and (2) Outfitter conflicts on public land.

Use of ATVs (8)	Illegally marked property
Outfitter conflicts on public land (8)	Improper posting of BLM lands by outfitters
Never witnessed any this year (4)	Lack of communication to landowner
Spotting/Guiding from aircraft (3)	Littering public use lands
Nonresidents using resident tags (2)	Light court sentences & lack of prosecution
Not wearing hunter orange (2)	No plug in shotgun (waterfowl hunting)
Shooting at signs/fenceposts (2)	No respect for other hunters
Spread of noxious weeds (2)	Not proficient with weapon
Untagged animals (2)	Poor image of hunters
Check station violations	Unlawful guiding (mountain lions)
Closing areas before season ends	Using lead shot on waterfowl
Cutting fences	Camping in migration lanes to exclude others
Elk harassment	Conflicts between hunters and forest user
General offensive behavior	
Hunting camps maintained year-round	

*The question gave the respondents a choice ranging from 1 to 5 to rate how often they felt these problems occurred in the last season. These responses were arbitrarily given titles corresponding with the number for ease of data entry into the CATI system.*



Almost half of the respondents (48%) stated that they felt these occurrences happened sometimes, somewhat frequently, to frequently. But a nearly equal number felt they occurred somewhat infrequently to infrequently. Eleven percent of the respondents offered no response to this question.

[Note: See “Conclusion” section for further discussion.]

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**Question 7: Using the list in Question 5, in your opinion what are the two most pressing hunter behavior problems that need to be addressed and improved in Montana?**

---

Behavior	# of Resp.	% of 413
Trespassing	120	29%
Lack of respect for landowner	107	26%
Improper vehicle use/road hunting	88	21%
Lack of respect for game and/or resources	79	19%
Other	68	16%
Damaging and littering others' property	40	10%
Drinking alcohol and hunting	30	7%
Illegal tag use/party hunting	25	6%
Taking or attempting to take game out of season	24	6%
Conflict between hunters competing for game/hunting areas	23	6%
Not recovering a wounded animal	19	5%
Game law violations/illegal hunting	18	4%
Killing a game animal that would not be eaten	17	4%
Shooting in unsafe locations; close to buildings	11	3%
Exceeding bag limits	8	2%
Spotlighting	4	1%
Taking or attempting to take game before or after legal shooting hours	4	1%
Improper or illegal use of electronic equipment	3	1%
Use of improper or illegal equipment	2	1%
No response	18	4%

The top two most pressing behavior problems that need to be addressed and improved in the opinions of the respondents are: (1) Trespassing; and (2) Lack of respect for landowner. "Improper vehicle use/road hunting" secured enough marks (21%) to compel closer look at this issue as well.

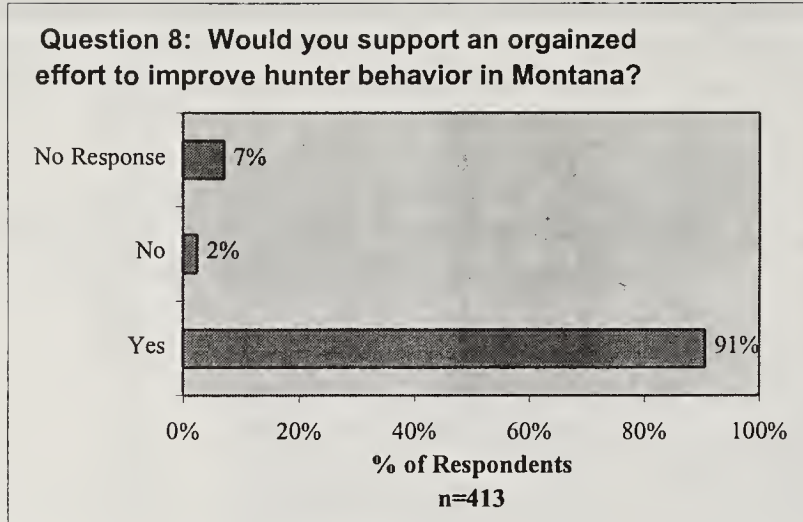
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**Question 7 "Other" Comments**

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The top two most commonly mentioned hunter behavior problems cited under the "Other" category are: (1) Use of ATVs/4-wheelers; and (2) Hunter/Outfitter conflicts for hunting areas.

Use of ATVs/4-wheelers (20)	Failure to verify hit or miss of game
Hunter/Outfitter conflicts for hunting areas (14)	Group hunting
Access (9)	High grading
General lack of ethics (7)	Herding elk off private land
"Slob hunters" giving poor public image (6)	Illegal guiding
Shooting at any animal (4)	Improper closing of areas
Hunting on private land without permission (3)	Lack of respect for hunters by landowners
Landowner/hunter relations (3)	Loaded weapons while driving vehicles
Out-of-staters (3)	Nonresidents using/buying resident tags
Lack of respect for other hunters (2)	Over commercialization of sport
Light court sentences & lack of prosecution (2)	Purchasing boundary land to limit access
Not proficient with weapon	Shooting at signs
Private property rights	Shooting from public road/highway
Shooting into a flock/herd	Walk-in hunting
Chasing/spotting game via aircraft	



The overwhelming response to this query was “yes,” garnishing over nine in 10 (91%) of the total responses. Only 10 of the respondents (2%) replied “no” to this question. In contrast, there were nearly three times as many “No Response” answers as there were “No” replies (28 and nine, respectively).



## Written Comment Synopsis

Following is a synopsis of the remarks made available to the council via the "Comments" section found at the end of the response form. This is a synopsis and categorization of the remarks, not verbatim comments.

While some of the comments found in this section are beyond the scope of the council's charge, they were included to show the extent of public feedback. Although no response-form data received after August 20, 1998, are included in this tabulation, it is interesting to note that response forms were still being delivered to FWP as of October 15, 1998.

The five most common written comments elicited from the respondents expressed:

1. concern about access and guides/outfitters buying "hunting rights."
2. concern about a few bad hunters making all hunters look unethical.
3. a need for stricter penalties for littering, trespassing, poaching, and defacing property.
4. general support for the HBAC effort.
5. concern about widespread use of ATVs and their negative impact on the sport of hunting.

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### Written Comments

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- \* Lack of access and guides/outfitters buying "hunting rights" (23)
- \* A few bad hunters are making the rest of us look bad (18)
- \* Stricter penalties for littering, trespassing, poaching, and defacing property (16)
- \* I am glad to see this effort being made (14)
- \* The widespread use of ATVs has a negative impact on the sport of hunting and should be eliminated or greatly reduced (12)
- \* We need greater enforcement and/or more game wardens (11)
- \* General decrease in respect for wildlife, land, and property by hunters (10)
- \* Ethical hunting needs to be stressed in Hunter Education (8)
- \* Hunter Behavior Advisory Council can only help the sport (7)
- \* Hunters need better media public relations to help the image of the sport (7)
- \* Restriction may be OK, but try education and incentives first (6)
- \* Hunters need to improve self-policing actions (5)
- \* Hunter behavior is vital to the continued survival of the sport (5)
- \* Hunter behavior seems generally good to me (5)
- \* Should create some sort of "Master Hunter" certificate, with incentives in terms of access and lower license fees to achieve it (5)
- \* As a landowner, it is my experience that out-of-state hunters are far more cordial and ethical than are instate hunters (4)
- \* Teach hunters basic competency, test them, and then see that they hunt accordingly (4)
- \* Good luck with the older guys. Go with the young hunters (4)
- \* Mandatory Hunter Education classes before anyone can buy a license (3)
- \* Respect for the landowners (3)

- \* Best way to improve behavior is education (3)
- \* Littering (3)
- \* Hunter and landowner relations need to be looked at together, as one definitely influences the other (3)
- \* You can teach good ethics in Hunter Education classes, but kids need a good background long before their 13th birthday (3)
- \* Most violations I noted were by out-of-state hunters (3)
- \* Education (2)
- \* This is a good idea, but the ones who need it the most probably won't benefit (3)
- \* Thank-you (2)
- \* This questionnaire is too negative or vague to be useful (2)
- \* I hunt only with ethical hunters, so I didn't see any infractions (2)
- \* You guys need to clean up the verbiage in the laws to make them easier to understand (2)
- \* There is overcrowding on public land. Suggest hunting with only a rifle or a bow, but not both, during the regular season. Give each its own season (2)
- \* For the most part, all the rules are followed, except in Gardiner (2)
- \* Press the value of landowner/hunter relationships (2)
- \* Don't be shy about this. Say what needs to be said, and don't sugar coat it (2)
- \* Technology is bad for the image of the sport because it encourages people to try to take shots they normally wouldn't (2)
- \* Educate people about movement of noxious weeds into areas via vehicle traffic (2)
- \* Game wardens need to patrol the Block Management areas early in the morning (2)
- \* The lack of any strong role model in today's homes gives way to less ethical hunting
- \* I think it [improved hunter behavior] shouldn't lie on the shoulders of only Montanans. I think it should also extend to out-of-staters
- \* This is an excellent project that is needed to set a firm direction for the future of hunting
- \* Good hunting ethics are very subjective
- \* Need to stop improper posting of BLM lands by outfitters
- \* Encourage hunters to walk more
- \* Limit the number of nonresidents that can hunt in one region, especially in the Breaks
- \* Enforcement needs to be more "undercover" oriented
- \* Most violations are within the middle-aged adult group
- \* Retrain out-of-state hunters
- \* Encourage outfitters to become involved and adopt a code of ethics
- \* When you give them access to your land, all they do is complain that they have to walk
- \* Increase the dialogue regarding hunter ethics
- \* Create a "District Landowner Day" (for greater landowner recognition)
- \* There seems to be a lot of bad attitudes that seem only to say "mine." People need to realize this [ land, resources, etc.] is "ours"
- \* Block Management program is having a positive effect on hunter behavior
- \* Camp sites are set up too long
- \* Make sure to link regulations to *real* problems
- \* A similar questionnaire was done by Erik Swenson, MSU Master's thesis in 1996. I'm sure this additional info would be useful
- \* Landowner respect and the role landowners play in game management needs to be taught in Hunter Education
- \* Education is acceptable, but the final decision on how to act is, and always should be, left up to each hunter

- \* Hunter Behavior Advisory Council money could be better spent on big game rather than "feel good" studies
- \* Worst ethics ever seen was during antelope season; sloppy shots, party hunting, road hunting, etc.
- \* For a long time, party hunting was the "unwritten rule" in MT. It will take a long time and serious effort to change this mentality
- \* Instead of increasing fine amounts, make them pick up litter in the woods
- \* Limit "trophy hunting" to preserve the biggest and best of each species
- \* Hunter Safety is already a program to improve hunter behavior
- \* The first hurdle to solving this problem was acknowledging that there is a behavior problem
- \* Have something about the Council and it's goals when you buy hunting permits
- \* We should have to renew our hunting certification every eight years to "refresh" ethical behavior, kind of like driver's license
- \* We need to make sure that we distinguish between real and perceived problems. For example, if a hunter is drinking in a bar at the end of the day, is this a problem?
- \* I think that if the weather kills off a lot of animals, you should close or suspend hunting season so they can recover
- \* You've made it real easy for hunters to expect access without earning it.
- \* You have taken on a very tough problem
- \* Good luck!



## Conclusion

The Hunter Behavior Advisory Council's response form was designed and distributed by HBAC to help identify hunting-related behaviors that are most troublesome in Montana and to offer anyone interested in these issues an easy way to gain access to the council and its decision-making process.

Individuals from every FWP Region in Montana took the opportunity to communicate with the council via the response form. These participants are not only highly active in the hunting sports--86 percent hunted this past season--but active politically and socially in their communities through various outdoor, hunting, shooting, and landowner affiliations.

For those who responded, big game was the predominant hunting goal, followed by upland gamebirds. Waterfowl hunters were represented as well, comprising 20 percent of the respondents. A significant amount of those who hunted big game last season also hunted upland gamebirds. Those who declared that they hunted waterfowl appeared to hunt them almost exclusively. It was the rare respondent who hunted in all three categories.

The top five hunter behavior problems that respondents witnessed this past season were:

1. Trespassing (49 percent)
2. Lack of respect for landowner (47 percent)
2. Improper vehicle use/road hunting (47 percent)
4. Lack of respect for game and/or resources (45 percent)
5. Damaging and littering others' property (38 percent)

Three of the top five issues relate directly to hunter/landowner relations.

It is interesting to note that most respondents who identified "Lack of respect for landowner" also checked "Damaging and littering others' property."

Two problems that did not make the top five that HBAC should examine are:

1. Drinking alcohol and hunting (33 percent)
2. The misuse of ATVs (*See page 7, Question 5 "Other" Comments*).

The majority (48 percent) reported witnessing problems that happened "Sometimes," "Somewhat Frequently" or "Frequently." An equally significant number, 42 percent of the respondents, said hunter behavior problems happened "Infrequently" or "Somewhat infrequently." As researchers have found in national surveys, HBAC's respondents appear to be split on the magnitude of the hunter behavior problem.

As a side note, it must be mentioned that if several behavior problems were checked on the form, the respondent was more likely to say these occurrences happened with greater frequency.



The Montanans who communicated with HBAC stated that the two most pressing hunter behavior problems that need to be addressed and improved are (*See page 9*):

1. Trespassing (29 percent)
2. Lack of respect for landowner (26 percent)

HBAC, FWP, hunters, landowners and others also should closely examine the issues brought forth in the "Comment" section found at the end of the survey. Participants aired grievances such as:

- \* Use of ATVs
- \* The use of ATVs and how that reflects on the image of hunting
- \* The lack of, or perceived lack of, access to hunting grounds and/or game due to outfitters leasing ground or buying "hunting rights"
- \* Possibly increasing penalties and/or fines as a greater deterrence
- \* Increasing/improving hunters' public image by paying more attention to the ethical hunter, not the few "slob" hunters that grab all the headlines

The respondents overwhelmingly support an organized effort to improve hunter behavior in Montana, with 91 percent in favor versus 2 percent who oppose the idea. One must ask, however, to what degree (. . . greater regulations?) and to what lengths (. . . diverting scarce revenues from other FWP programs? . . . increased license fees? ) would they support such an effort, and who should lead this effort? Such unknowns may have led 7 percent of the respondents to not answer this question.

In summary, the HBAC response form appears to have accomplished its main purpose. The information has given HBAC an idea of what Montana hunters--and those affected by or otherwise interested in hunting issues--think and feel about hunter behavior problems in Montana. These 413 communications have also provided HBAC with valuable feedback that has helped the council better understand the hunter behavior issue and to frame its recommendations. It is through increased awareness and greater discussion between the regulating agency and the people it serves that the hunter-behavior issue can be most effectively and efficiently addressed and answered.





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